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Viewing cable 05OTTAWA706, CANADIAN OPPOSITION LEADER HEARS DISAPPOINTMENT

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- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#05OTTAWA706**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
05OTTAWA706	2005-03-04 21:22	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN	Embassy Ottawa

Appears in these articles:

<http://aptn.ca/pages/news/2011/05/18/u-s-asked-weapons-firm-to-twist-canadian-arms-on-missile-defence-diplomatic-cables/>

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

id: 28178

date: 3/4/2005 21:22

refid: 05OTTAWA706

origin: Embassy Ottawa

classification: CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN

destination:

header:

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

----- header ends -----

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 OTTAWA 000706

SIPDIS

NOFORN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/04/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: CANADIAN OPPOSITION LEADER HEARS DISAPPOINTMENT
RATHER THAN "SOLIDARITY" ON MISSILE DEFENSE

Classified By: DCM John Dickson. Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C/NF) Summary: Ambassador Cellucci met March 4 with Conservative Party Leader Stephen Harper, at the latter's request. Although the original reason for the meeting was to explain and gain understanding for the Opposition Party's position on Missile Defense, the Senate vote to keep the border closed to live Canadian beef and the murder of four Canadian police officers by a drug dealer in Alberta also came up. The Ambassador took the opportunity to raise concerns over lack of leadership in both major parties in their handling of Missile Defense. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) The Opposition leader first raised the hot topic of the Senate vote on beef exports to the U.S. and asked about the current status of the minimal risk rule. The Ambassador explained the process and pointed out the announcement by the President to veto any measure that came from Congress to overturn that ruling. This was about as strong a signal as anyone could get that there is no linkage between trade issues and Ottawa's rejection of Canadian participation in missile defense. (NOTE: Newly arrived Canadian Ambassador to Washington Frank McKenna, in a recent interview, had hinted at possible linkages between trade problems and Canadian public attitudes toward cooperation with the U.S. END NOTE.) It was a not subtle message, comparing a leader who knew what was in the best interests of the U.S. and was not shy about expending political capital in standing up for it.

[1](#)3. (C/NF) Harper asked the Ambassador for his take on the government's handling of the Missile Defense issue. The Ambassador pointed out that the two reasons he heard from

Martin were that he could not trust the Conservatives for their support and he wanted to avoid an anti-American debate. Harper said that he never heard that there was a specific proposal on the table, and the Conservatives were unprepared to support a project or a proposal whose contents had not been revealed or even discussed.

14. (C/NF) The Ambassador dismissed this as playing politics with North American security. He pointed out his dismay that when the government, in response to a NATO request, was considering sending a small number of Canadian trainers to Iraq to help train the Iraqi army, the Conservatives were the first to launch a shrill protest against boots on the ground in Iraq. Harper countered weakly that they needed to do this because the Liberal election campaign had effectively targeted them as being hawks on Iraq. The Ambassador also pointed to the last-minute Conservative renege in Parliament on the bill to split International Trade from the Department of Foreign Affairs that caused the government its first legislative defeat. Harper tried to correct the record by saying that they had never promised their support over this bad idea and that, even when they had come out in support of Liberal initiatives (the budget, e.g.), government insiders planted critical leaks in the press that made the Conservatives look bad.

15. (C/NF) On the Missile Defense decision, the Ambassador reiterated his disappointment that Canadian leaders on both sides of the House of Commons had refused to provide the leadership needed to do what was in Canada's interest. The White House was not happy with the way the issue was handled, and Washington officials, especially in Defense, were questioning Canada's reliability as a partner. For the first time Canada and the U.S. were out of step on North American defense. With respect to NORAD, the Ambassador expected that we would move forward with the renewal process, but in a more limited, cautious manner than might have been the case with Canadian participation in Missile Defense. He found it odd that Canadians at NORAD would now be able to help identify and analyze an incoming missile threat to North America, but would presumably have to leave the room when decisions were made on what to do about it.

16. (C/NF) The Ambassador then commented favorably on what appeared to be a significant and meaningful increase in Canadian defense spending, calculated to at least to begin to reverse a decade long decline. His impression was that this funding was serious and was locked into a procurement cycle, and wondered if his optimism were justified. Harper said that if the decision rested with the Conservative Party, it would be a guaranteed deal, but he couldn't say the same about the Liberals. Down the road, you could never be sure which way the Liberal wind would be blowing.

17. (C/NF) Ambassador Cellucci expressed his and Washington's condolences on the loss of the four Mounties gunned down the day before while conducting a marijuana grow-op investigation in Harper's home province of Alberta. He asked Harper if this would have any effect on the government's plans to decriminalize marijuana. Harper thought that it would probably put the brakes on the pending legislation to decriminalize small amounts of marijuana. The Liberal party stance on drugs, however, especially marijuana, tended to be soft. Passage of the bill might be slowed, but it would likely move forward later in the year.

18. (C/NF) Comment: The leader of the Opposition came looking for understanding and solidarity in criticism of the Martin government, but the Ambassador's message was blunt: Canada's handling of the Missile Defense issue reflected a basic lack of principled leadership on the part of both the government and the Opposition. The latter, sticking to the line they were not expected to lead, never laid out a principled position in support of North American defense, and instead used this issue to try to divide the Liberal party. And the Liberal government, given its minority status and the need to stop the hemorrhaging of votes in pacifist Quebec and left-leaning urban ridings in Ontario, also based its decision on political expediency. In terms of security policy, however, both sides knew that at least symbolic participation in missile defense was where Canada should be heading. End Comment

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